

News Release
For Immediate Release: April 06, 2009

Gespe'gewaq Mi'gmaq Resource Council partners with hatchery to further Atlantic salmon conservation and restoration



From left to right: Councilor Ron Simonson, Eel River Bar; Chief Everett Martin, Eel River Bar; Mark J. Sark, CEO of GMRC; and Michel Belanger, Manager of CSEC.

April 06, 2009 (Listuguj, QC) - The Gespe'gewaq Mi'gmaq Resource Council (GMRC) and the Charlo Salmonid Enhancement Centre Inc. (CSEC) have announced today, that they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that aims to strengthen their commitment on the preservation of the Atlantic salmon in the Restigouche region.

Wishing to build on their continued success working in the field of aquatic resource and oceans management, GMRC's goals are two fold. First, create employment opportunities for First Nation people, and secondly promote awareness on the importance of sound stewardship practices through enhancement related activities.

"I think it's important to mention that the actions of Eel River Bar First Nation and Listuguj were instrumental in assuring the survival of the hatchery. The MOU is just another step forward in building on a commitment already undertaken by both Mi'gmaq communities," says Mark J. Sark, CEO of the Gespe'gewaq Mi'gmaq Resource Council.

Mr. Sark goes on to add, "while the Federal Government has essentially abandoned its responsibility of managing our watersheds, rivers, and estuaries by divesting its interests to provincial fish hatcheries, First Nations have done their part by ensuring the doors stay open at Charlo." He adds, "This is a message that we want to send to government and surrounding municipalities. Our people remain committed in our resolve to make certain that the Atlantic salmon does not end up by way of the cod."

Both the GMRC and the CSEC intend to work together on various projects associated with conservation of salmon resources in various watersheds, as well as, help each other by building capacity and finding other potential opportunities for the fish hatchery. While in the primary stages at this point, they may also take a look other markets and perhaps rearing other species besides salmon and trout.

According to Robert Chiasson, President of the CSEC, "The Charlo Salmonid Enhancement Centre Inc. is very pleased to enter into a partnership agreement with the GMRC." He adds, "The Partnership agreement and the financial contribution from GMRC will help us secure the second phase on the ACOA project and it will ensure that the CSEC will continue to be a centre for education, conservation and restoration of our salmonid resources."

The newly created partnership further demonstrates that GMRC is always planning for its future and how to get more people interested in aquatic and resource management. "I am pleased that GMRC has developed a strong working relationship with the CSEC in order to continue with its work in the field of aquatic resource management. This joint co-operation serves as an example

of the success that can be achieved by working closely with and by building strategic partners," said Chief Everett Martin of the Eel River Bar First Nation.

Located in Listuguj, Quebec, GMRC is a vibrant organization built on a solid management foundation. Currently shared by the three Mi'gmaq communities of Eel River Bar, Pabineau, and Listuguj; the organization provides services in the area of natural resources and oceans management. The organization is committed in providing the highest services possible. To that goal, GMRC is structured under an ISO 9001:2000 recognized quality management system and received certification in 2008.

GMRC's approach to fisheries enhancement is nothing new. Some of its previous work includes lobster-seeding projects, in collaboration with the Maritime Fishermen's Union, and the PLAMU project sponsored by Health Canada. Mr. Sark adds, "We have a significant role to play in how the resources are managed in our territory, and we must be willing to take a more pro-active approach by ensuring we have a resource to pass on to our children. It's in our best interests to work collaboratively with organizations such as the CSEC to ease the burden on our natural resource base so that we can sustain our activities within the Bay of Chaleur."

GMRC is dedicated to this stakeholder-approach to fishery enhancement and restoration. GMRC recognizes a need to do its part in building on the importance of restoration and how the Mi'gmaq can take more of a leading role in this area. It recognizes that fish serve as a bio-indicator species for the local watershed and are proud to know that the work they are doing in this area is having an impact.

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For more information about GMRC, please visit our web site: www.migmaqresource.org

